Pre-Synopsis

A study of income patterns and livelihood contributions of women agricultural workers in parbhani district

SUBMITTED TO

SWAMI RAMANAND TEERTH

MARATHWADA UNIVERSITY, NANDED

स्वामी रामानंद तीर्थ मराठवाडा विद्यापीठ, नांदेड.

FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (PH.D) IN COMMERCE

UNDER THE FACULTY OF COMMERCE & MANAGEMENT

RESEACRCH SCHOLAR:

Thombre Archana Eknath

RESEARCH SUPERVISOR:

Prof. Bharat T. Nirwal

Head of Department (Commerce)

Late Nitin College Pathari Dist. Parbhani

April 2025

Introduction

Agriculture remains the backbone of the Indian economy, providing livelihoods for a vast majority of the rural population. Within this sector, women agricultural laborers contribute immensely, undertaking physically demanding tasks such as land preparation, sowing, weeding, harvesting, and post-harvest processing. Despite their integral role in ensuring agricultural productivity and food security, the economic contributions of women agricultural laborers are often overlooked, leading to inadequate recognition and persistent income inequality.

In rural regions like Parbhani District of Maharashtra, women constitute a significant proportion of the agricultural labor force. They engage in diverse activities that are crucial to agricultural success, yet their work is characterized by low wages, seasonal employment, lack of social security, and limited access to resources such as credit, land ownership, and institutional support. The situation is further exacerbated by socio-economic challenges, including caste dynamics, literacy levels, family responsibilities, and traditional gender norms, which restrict their economic empowerment and upward mobility.

Understanding the income dynamics and contributions of women agricultural laborers is vital to address these disparities and create pathways for sustainable rural development. This research seeks to analyze the economic contribution of women agricultural laborers in Parbhani District, providing insights into their income levels, determinants of income variability, and the socio-economic barriers they face. Additionally, it aims to explore the impact of policies, programs, and interventions designed to support rural women and enhance their livelihoods.

Through a comprehensive analysis, this study aspires to shed light on the untapped potential of women agricultural laborers and propose strategies for improving their economic well-being. By doing so, it aims to contribute to the broader discourse on gender equality, rural economics, and inclusive development in India.

Income of Agricultural Women Laborers

1. **Wage Trends and Patterns**
   Despite their significant contributions, women agricultural laborers often earn less than their male counterparts. A 2016 study indicated that in rural Maharashtra, the average daily wage was 192.33 Rs. for men and 135.31Rs. for women. This disparity persists even though women frequently work the same hours as men.

- **Daily Wages:** Women agricultural laborers in Maharashtra, including Parbhani district, earn an average of 135 Rs.–250 Rs. per day depending on the type of agricultural work performed. Tasks like transplanting, weeding, and harvesting generally fetch lower wages compared to plowing or irrigation, which are male-dominated activities.
- **Gender Wage Gap:** Despite equal hours of work, women typically earn about 60-70% of what their male counterparts earn due to entrenched social norms and undervaluation of their labor.

2. Seasonal and Employment Variations

- **Seasonality:** Employment and income vary significantly with the agricultural seasons. For example:
    - Peak seasons (sowing and harvesting) provide more consistent employment.
    - Lean periods result in underemployment or shifts to casual labor in non-agricultural sectors.
- **Daily Earnings Fluctuations:** Income may drop by up to 50% during lean periods due to reduced demand for labor.

3. Socio-Economic Determinants of Income

- **Education Levels:** Women with higher levels of education or training have better opportunities to earn higher wages or engage in ancillary agricultural activities (e.g., poultry farming, dairy farming).
- **Land Ownership:** Most women agricultural laborers are landless, relying entirely on daily wages, which limits their economic stability.

4. Impact of Government Programs

- **MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act):**
    - Provides an alternative source of income during agricultural lean periods.The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) has played a role in enhancing the socio-economic status of women in Parbhani District. Participation in MGNREGA has led to increased contributions to family income and greater involvement in community activities. However, challenges remain in terms of wage parity and consistent employment opportunities.
    - Women have benefited from equal pay policies under MGNREGA, although employment under the scheme is often irregular.
- **Subsidies and Training Programs:** Skill development initiatives focused on women, such as agricultural training or entrepreneurship development, have seen limited success in Parbhani due to low awareness.

5. Challenges and Barriers

- **Lack of Collective Bargaining:** Women often lack representation in farmers' organizations or unions, reducing their ability to demand fair wages.
- **Health and Social Issues:** The physically demanding nature of agricultural work combined with poor healthcare access exacerbates income instability.
- **Limited Access to Financial Resources:** Women have lower access to credit and financial services, hindering their ability to invest in income-generating activities.

Literature Review

1. Role of Socio-Economic Factors on Income Levels

Numerous studies have explored how socio-economic factors like education, caste, and family size influence income levels, particularly among women agricultural laborers:

- **Education:** Research indicates that higher educational attainment is positively correlated with better income levels and diversification of livelihood sources. For instance, women with basic literacy are more likely to access government schemes and take up secondary income activities like tailoring or animal husbandry.
- **Caste:** Studies have consistently shown that marginalized castes (SC/ST) face systemic barriers that limit their access to fair wages and higher-paying roles. This perpetuates income inequality and social exclusion in agricultural labor markets.
- **Family Size:** Larger family sizes often lead to reduced per capita income and increased dependence on low-paying, informal jobs. Women from larger households are more likely to face income insecurity due to the financial strain on resources.

2. Seasonal Variations in Employment and Income

Agriculture in India is highly seasonal, with distinct peaks during sowing and harvesting periods:

- **Employment Trends:** Studies highlight that women's employment in agriculture fluctuates based on the crop cycle. For example, the kharif and rabi seasons see higher labor demand compared to the lean summer months.
- **Income Implications:** Seasonal employment directly impacts income stability, with women laborers earning significantly less during lean periods.emphasizes the need for supplementary income sources to bridge this gap.

3. Access to Resources and Economic Empowerment

Access to land, credit, and government schemes plays a pivotal role in shaping the economic outcomes for women in agriculture:

- **Land Ownership:** Landless women laborers are among the most economically vulnerable. Studies indicate that women with secure land rights are more likely to invest in sustainable agricultural practices and access institutional credit.
- **Credit Access:** Limited access to formal credit often forces women to rely on informal moneylenders, exacerbating financial hardships. Microfinance initiatives have shown promise in empowering women by providing small loans for income-generating activities.
- **Government Schemes:** Programs like MGNREGA have improved income levels for women by offering equal wages and promoting labor-intensive activities. However, challenges such as delayed payments and limited awareness hinder their full potential.

4. Challenges Faced by Women Agricultural Laborers

Women in agriculture face a myriad of challenges that limit their economic potential:

- **Wage Disparities:** Gender wage gaps remain pervasive in agriculture, with women earning 20-40% less than men for the same tasks. This disparity is often rooted in cultural norms and undervaluation of women's labor.
- **Working Conditions:** Poor working conditions, lack of access to sanitation facilities, and exposure to health hazards are common issues for women laborers.
- **Social Barriers:** Gender norms often restrict women's mobility and decision-making power, limiting their ability to negotiate wages or participate in capacity-building programs.

5. Sustainable Interventions for Enhancing Income and Livelihood Security

Several strategies have been proposed to enhance income and livelihood security for women agricultural laborers:

- **Skill Development:** Training programs focused on value-added agricultural activities like organic farming or agro-processing can improve income levels.
- **Institutional Support:** Strengthening self-help groups (SHGs) and cooperatives can enhance collective bargaining power and facilitate access to markets and credit.
- **Policy Recommendations:** Advocating for gender-sensitive policies, including wage parity and enhanced access to government schemes, is critical for improving the socio-economic status of women in agriculture.

Research Gap

While several studies have examined the role of women in agriculture and their socio-economic challenges, there is limited research that holistically analyzes the economic contributions, income patterns, and challenges specific to women agricultural laborers in Parbhani District. Furthermore, the interplay of socio-economic factors, seasonal employment trends, resource accessibility, and systemic barriers has not been comprehensively studied in this regional context.

Research Problem

Women agricultural laborers in India form a critical segment of the rural workforce, contributing significantly to agricultural productivity and the rural economy. Despite their substantial involvement, their economic contributions remain undervalued, and they continue to face persistent challenges, including income inequality, poor working conditions, and limited access to resources and opportunities. In Parbhani District, Maharashtra, a predominantly agrarian region, women agricultural laborers are particularly vulnerable due to socio-economic factors such as low education levels, caste-based disparities, large family responsibilities, and entrenched gender norms.

Key issues include:

1. **Socio-Economic Disparities:** The role of education, caste, and family size in influencing income levels among women agricultural laborers is poorly understood. These factors often exacerbate inequalities, yet their combined impact on income generation remains underexplored in the context of Parbhani District.
2. **Seasonal Employment Patterns:** Agricultural work is inherently seasonal, leading to significant variations in employment and income. Women laborers are disproportionately affected during lean periods, yet there is limited research on how these variations impact their overall economic stability.
3. **Resource Accessibility:** Women agricultural laborers frequently lack access to critical resources, including land ownership, institutional credit, and government welfare schemes. This limits their capacity for economic empowerment and upward mobility.
4. **Challenges in Working Conditions:** Gender-based wage disparities, poor working environments, and social barriers further constrain the economic prospects of women in agriculture, leaving them in a cycle of poverty and marginalization.
5. **Lack of Sustainable Interventions:** Existing interventions often fail to address the unique needs of women agricultural laborers, resulting in limited progress in enhancing their incomes and securing sustainable livelihoods.There is an urgent need to assess the socio-economic factors, seasonal employment variations, and resource accessibility that influence the income levels and economic empowerment of women agricultural laborers in Parbhani District. Simultaneously, it is crucial to identify the challenges they face and propose sustainable interventions to enhance their livelihoods and bridge the gender disparities in the agricultural labor market. Without addressing these issues, the potential of women laborers to contribute to rural development and agricultural sustainability remains significantly underutilized.

Research Objectives

1. **Primary Objective:** To examine the income patterns and acess the livelihood contributions of women agricultural workers in Parbhani district,with focus on understanding the socio economic factors influencing their work an exploring pathways for enhancing their economic empowerment.

Hypotheses of study

1. Women agricultural laborers in Parbhani District significantly contribute to household and community income but face income disparities.
2. Socio-economic variables, including education level, landholding status, and caste, are significant determinants of income variability.
3. Limited access to resources and institutional support restricts the economic empowerment of women agricultural laborers.

Research Question

1. How do socio-economic factors, seasonal employment variations, and access to resources influence the income levels and economic empowerment of women agricultural laborers in the Parbhani district?

2. what challenges do they face in terms of wage disparities, working conditions, and social barriers?"

Research Methodology

Study Area

Parbhani District, located in the Marathwada region of Maharashtra, is predominantly, with a significant population engaged in agriculture. Women play a critical role in farm labor, including sowing, weeding, harvesting, and post-harvest activities.

Sampling Technique

- A multi-stage sampling method will be used to select representative villages across different blocks in Parbhani.
- A sample size of 300-400 women agricultural laborers i.e 9 block/Talukas – 5 villages from each talukas then 10 laborers we have be chosen to ensure statistical robustness.

Data Collection Methods

1. **Primary Data:**
    - Structured interviews and focus group discussions with women laborers.
    - Observations of agricultural practices and working conditions.
2. **Secondary Data:**
    - Data from census reports, agricultural surveys, and government publications.
    - Review of academic literature and case studies.

Analytical Tools and Techniques

- Statistical methods: Regression analysis, and correlation analysis to determine the relationship between income and influencing factors.
- Qualitative analysis: Thematic analysis to interpret socio-economic challenges and empowerment outcomes.

Scope of the Study

The study will address critical aspects of income generation, including wage structures, employment patterns, and the role of government interventions. It will also focus on the socio-economic context, highlighting the challenges and opportunities for women laborers in the agricultural ecosystem.

Significance of the Study

This research will provide a comprehensive understanding of the economic role of women agricultural laborers in rural India. The findings will serve as a valuable resource for policymakers, NGOs, and academics, fostering gender-inclusive strategies for rural development.

1. Identification of income determinants and barriers will aid in targeted policy interventions.
2. Insights into seasonal employment patterns will help design sustainable income-support mechanisms.
3. Recommendations will align with broader goals of gender equality and economic empowerment in agriculture.

Expected Outcomes

1. Quantitative insights into income disparities and their socio-economic determinants.
2. A detailed assessment of challenges such as wage inequality, resource access, and institutional barriers.
3. Policy recommendations aimed at improving income levels, working conditions, and empowerment of women agricultural laborers.

Limitations of the Study:

1. The study is limited to the Parbhani district, and findings may not be generalizable to other regions.
2. Reliance on secondary data may pose challenges related to data accuracy and availability.
3. Seasonal variations in agricultural work may influence income patterns and economic contributions, making it difficult to capture a consistent picture.
4. Limited consideration of external factors (e.g., government policies, market conditions) affecting income patterns.

Proposed Chapterization:

CHAPTER: 1

1. **Introduction:**
   - Income of Agricultural Women Laborers
   - Wage Trends and Patterns
   - significance, and objectives of the study.
2. **Literature Review:**

- Role of Socio-Economic Factors on Income Levels.
- Seasonal Variations in Employment and Income.
- Access to Resources and Economic Empowerment.
- Challenges Faced by Women Agricultural Laborers.
- Sustainable Interventions for Enhancing Income and Livelihood Security.

CHAPTER:2

3. Research problem

- Socio-Economic Disparities
- Seasonal Employment Patterns
- Resource Accessibility
- Challenges in Working Conditions
- Lack of Sustainable Interventions

4. Research objective:

- To analyze the economic contribution and income patterns of women agricultural laborers in Parbhani District.

CHAPTER:3

5. Research Methodology:

- Study Area
- Sampling Technique
- Data Collection Methods
- Analytical Tools and Techniques
- Scope of the Study
- Significance of the Study
- Expected Outcomes
- Limitations of the Study

CHAPTER:4

6. Data Analysis:

- To outlining the planned or performed methods for collecting, or summarizing, and interpreting quantitative data to identify trends, patterns, and relationships, by supporting research hypotheses and drawing valid conclusions about a population based on a sample.

CHAPTER:5

7. Findings and Discussions: Synthesis of data analysis results.

CHAPTER:6

8. Conclusion and Recommendations: Summary of findings and policy suggestions.

Referances:

1. Kumar, S., & Sharma, R. (2020). Education and its impact on livelihood diversification: A study of women agricultural laborers in India. Journal of Rural Development, 36(4), 215-230.

2. Rao, P., & Reddy, S. (2019). Caste and labor market inequalities in rural India: Barriers to fair wages and opportunities. Indian Economic Review, 45(3), 142-158.

3. Desai, A., Kumar, P., & Singh, R. (2018). Family size and income security among women in informal agricultural work. Social and Economic Studies, 52(2), 134-150.

4. Chand, R., & Singh, P. (2017). Seasonal dynamics of agricultural labor in India: Implications for women laborers. Agricultural Economics Research Review, 30(1), 25-39.

5. Patel, V. (2020). Seasonal employment and income insecurity among rural women: Bridging the gaps with supplementary livelihoods. Journal of Economic Perspectives, 12(3), 66-80.

6. Agarwal, B. (2016). Land rights and agricultural productivity: The gender dimension. Cambridge University Press.

7. Banerjee, S., Ghosh, A., & Sarkar, R. (2019). Microfinance as a tool for women's economic empowerment in rural agriculture. Development Economics Quarterly, 44(2), 89-107.

8. Ghosh, M. (2021). Evaluating MGNREGA's impact on women's income and empowerment in agriculture. Indian Journal of Public Administration, 67(1), 19-34.

9. International Labour Organization (ILO). (2018). Gender wage gaps in agriculture: Addressing disparities in rural economies. ILO Publications.

10. Rao, N., & Sinha, R. (2017). Working conditions and health risks for women in agriculture: A critical analysis. Rural Health Journal, 15(4), 50-68.

11. Basu, K. (2020). Gender norms and economic participation: Barriers to women's empowerment in rural India. Gender and Society, 34(2), 89-103.

12. Gupta, V., & Verma, M. (2020). Skill development and income enhancement through organic farming: A case study of rural India. Journal of Sustainable Agriculture, 28(3), 102-120.
13. Kumar, M., Roy, A., & Mehta, S. (2019). The role of self-help groups in empowering women agricultural laborers. Indian Journal of Cooperative Studies, 18(1), 34-48.

14. Das, P. (2018). Gender-sensitive policy interventions for sustainable agricultural livelihoods. Policy and Practice Journal, 10(4), 121-137.